Update on ICT issues:

In November '24 the parish council considered report WPC.24.11.05, an update on ICT issues, which included a summary of the current drive to encourage councils to move to a .gov.uk domain including emails (min. 24.11.9.7 refers), and in order to lead by example, SALC have now completed their move to .gov.uk.

What is a .gov.uk domain

A domain acts as an address to help people find you (like a street address). The difference between a .co.uk domain and a .gov.uk one is that .gov.uk are only available to government departments and agencies. This means registration is strictly controlled and this can help provide assurance that your council is an official layer of local government. The Parish Council Domains Helper Service have released a short video explaining the 'what and why' of .gov.uk domains - click here to view the video.

What are the benefits and risks

As a tier of the public sector, is vital that town and parish councils work securely and effectively. The benefits of having a .gov.uk domain (see full list from .gov.uk at **Appendix A**) includes better controls and protection against cyber harm and consistency on the way information is handled and stored. This will result in enabling a more efficient way of handling freedom of information or subject access requests. Administratively it also easier when somebody leaves the organisation for a host of reasons including ensuring data is deleted which is currently not possible where individual private email addresses are used.

What to do if your council is considering moving

You should contact the Parish Council Domain Helper Service to help you get started by **completing this form**. This will register your interest and result in you being invited to one of their virtual introductory sessions which will last approximately 45 minutes. You will be able to choose a date and time with new dates being added throughout the year. The service will provide guidance at key stages including picking the best Approved Registrar, setting up your new domain and maintaining good practices after your new site has gone live. The Service will also tell you how you can access funding (£100 plus VAT) to help with the initial set up costs. This funding is only available for this financial year and will be awarded to the first 1000 councils. So far, almost 500 councils have benefitted from the funding and it is expected that all funding will be allocated by February 2025. It has now been confirmed that funding will not be available in future years and the Parish Council Domain Helper Service would encourage councils who have ambition to move in this financial year, to engage as soon as possible. All funding is allocated on a first-come, first-serve basis.

The advice in the Practitioners Guide now contains stronger language around the merits of moving to a .gov.uk domain:

> In particular at 5.2.10 of the Guide stating "*all parish, town and community councils are eligible to use, and are advised to use, a .gov.uk domain for their websites and email communications...*"

Whilst the parish already has dedicated e-mail addresses for both clerk and councillors (wickhambrook.org.uk) through Microsoft, which is likely to meet the minimum standard acceptable under audit, I have undertaken some additional research to understand better the likely costs and implications of moving to a .gov.uk domain for parish council e-mails and the parish council pages of the website.

Hilary Workman
Clerk & RFO
February 2025

This has included discussions with our website provider, Mdsign, to get an idea of some of the practical issues that would need to be addressed (as pressure to move will increase over time).

Mdsign has provided a very detailed and helpful summary of the options available to the parish council (attached as **Appendix B**), summarised below:
    a) **.gov.uk Parish Council emails only**
    b) **.gov.uk Parish Council emails only and Parish Council element of website**
    c) **.gov.uk Parish Council emails only and existing website in entirety**
    d) **Email as per Option A, website remain as is**

Estimated Costs

Item	Initial Cost (plus VAT)	Recurring Costs (plus VAT)	Notes
Domain			
.gov.uk domain registration	£30.00		
domain renewal		£22.00	Bi-annual
.org domain renewal			Within hosting costs
Hosting			
If only e-mail			No charge
e-mail and parish council website	£335.00	£335.00	Less 25% for two sites
.org.uk e-mail hosting	-		No charge – provided through Microsoft
.org e-mail and website hosting	£335.00		If split, less 25% discount
.org e-mail only	£55.00	£55.00	
Development Fees			
Managing set up of .gov.uk domain, hosting and e-mail services	No charge		
Splitting the website into two	£315 - £630		
Management costs			
Creating hosting package, setting up domain etc	£180 - £270		
Security premium plug-in	£149.00	£149.00	Dependant on advice, may not be needed for .gov.uk, but if website split community pages would benefit from this.
Total	**£860 - £1414**	**£506**	

Costs for time for updating Microsoft Accounts – not yet quoted but likely to be around £50 - £100.

Hilary Workman
Clerk & RFO
February 2025

Powers:
Local Government Act 1972, s.111 - Power to do anything that will facilitate, be conducive to or incidental to the discharge of its powers and functions.

Funding:
There is no funding within the revenue budget for this move in the 2025-26 financial year

Earmarked Reserves:
Safety & Security Measures   £575

Actions:
1.   Decide whether to:
   a.   move to .gov.uk in the 2025.26 FY; or
   b.   Signal an intent to move to .gov.uk in 2026/27, build costs into the next draft budget
2.   Decide whether to split the website to parish and community pages (this would be likely to provide clarity, and reduce confusion for visitors to clubs and non parish services (clerk and hosting preference is a split)
3.   Choose a domain name –
   a.   wickhambrookparishcouncil.gov.uk or
   b.   wickhambrook-pc.gov.uk (clerk's preference for speed)
4.   Decide a timescale for the work
5.   Develop a project plan, to include advance messaging to both public and auditors.

Hilary Workman
Clerk & RFO
February 2025

A .gov.uk domain name used by your organisation:

- shows services, emails and websites are from a trusted UK public sector organisation like a central government department or parish council
- means your website and service could potentially show up higher in search results
- allows staff to join public sector communities which require a .gov.uk email
- is monitored for potential security vulnerabilities, which will be reported to you by the Protecting Public Sector Domains Team at Cabinet Office
- gives your organisation the ability to better control email accounts by removing staff when they leave
- gives your domain better legal protection because it's based in a UK jurisdiction
- means outgoing emails are more likely to be cleared by security filters and delivered to citizens and other public sector organisations
- increases transparency of smaller organisations when public servants use corporate email accounts instead of personal email accounts for official government business
- helps smaller organisations fulfil best practice guidelines as outlined in the [Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance Practitioners' Guide 2021](#)

Hilary Workman
Clerk & RFO
February 2025

Hi Hilary,

Following our recent conversation about the use of a .gov.uk domain name I have watched the guidance video and found out some further details and options for you to consider:

Domain name registration

I am able to provide a gov.uk domain name registration as the Registrar I use is on the approved list and meets the necessary criteria.

- The cost for the domain name is currently £30 plus VAT for a 1 year registration.
- The domain name has to contain the phrase parishcouncil or end in -pc. So you could have wickhambrookparishcouncil.gov.uk or wickhambrook-pc.gov.uk
- I have been asked to provide this url to you by my Registrar https://www.gov.uk/apply-for-and-manage-a-gov-uk-domain-name
    - Steps 4 - 6 are managed via myself with my Registrar but you should still be aware of them.
- There are rules for using the .gov.uk name, I have been asked to provide you with this url https://www.gov.uk/guidance/use-your-govuk-domain-name#follow-the-rules-for-using-a-govuk-domain-name
- The Registrant must have a .gov.uk email address. Please see below under options which summarises what we discussed in relation to possibly moving your email to the .gov.uk domain. My Registrar has confirmed that they are able to register the name on our behalf using one of their email addresses temporarily and then replace it with yours once everything is set up (parishclerk@ email account would be the Registrant).
- I will need to complete a form which is then submitted on our behalf. The following information will be required:
    - Who is this domain name for (there is a list to choose from - one of the options is Parish, Town or Community council)
    - The name of the person registering the domain (Registrant):
    - Role of the person registering the domain (Registrant):
    - Organisation name:
    - Email address (Use a current work email address for the Registrant):
    - Contact details of the registrant:
    - Address 1:
    - Address 2:
    - Address 3:
    - County:
    - Post Code:
    - Phone:
    - Email Address:
- Once the form is submitted, I will need to pay for the registration. I will invoice for

that in the usual way.

- Usually I am able to manage domain names on behalf of my clients but I will not be able to make any changes to your domain name and would liaise with my hosting company to make changes on our behalf if at any time that was necessary. Changes to domain names is not a common issue and so this is not a concern.

Email Services

You currently have your Clerk and Councillor email accounts provided by Microsoft and they use the domain name wickhambrook.org.uk

Website

We currently host the Parish Council and community website under wickhambrook.org. I also provide 'standard' email accounts to various members of our community under that hosting.

OPTIONS

It is helpful to understand that it is not possible to provide Microsoft email services and standard mailboxes from one domain, it has to be one or the other. For the purposes of the explanation below I have assumed we will use the domain name wickhambrook-pc.gov.uk.

OPTION A - .gov.uk Parish Council emails only

Move your email services to wickhambrook-pc.gov.uk. This will enable compliance with the domain name registration stipulated above. Your email addresses would therefore become for instance parishclerk@wickhambrook-pc.gov.uk etc.

- Once the domain is set up, the settings on your Microsoft account and devices would need to be updated by your IT Support (Glenn).
- Your current mailboxes would continue to run until the changes were made.
- When the new mailboxes are in place and working, I would revert the mailboxes of parishclerk@wickhambrook.org.uk etc back to standard mailboxes which I host (not Microsoft ones) and place forwarding on them so that any emails received to old addresses would be forwarded.
- After a period of time the wickhambrook.org.uk domain name could be discontinued if the Parish Council wished. Information about this would be provided at the time but there are elements that need to be taken into consideration by the Parish Council to ensure there is no risk in releasing the domain name.
- You would need to liaise with Glenn to ensure your historic mail is still available to you following the change of account. That is related to Microsoft mail accounts and so isn't something I can help with. We would need to liaise on timings for this to ensure everything runs smoothly.

OPTION B - .gov.uk Parish Council emails only and Parish Council element of website

We use the wickhambrook-pc.gov.uk domain to host both your email and a split off version of the website which only contains Parish Council related information.

- As per option A but we also include a split off version of the website which will

include all Parish Council information such as Agendas, Minutes, Clerk Reports, Clerk news etc.

- I would liaise with you to decide what information we include.
- This would give us a website address of www.wickhambrook-pc.gov.uk
- We would have to give some consideration on how we style the split version, whether we keep the same style for both sites or possibly keep the same look but change the colours so visitors have an idea they are on different aspects of the site. We would effectively have a Parish Council website and a Community or Parish website. I would anticipate we leave all links as they are on the navigation menu of both sites so visitors can navigate easily between them. A disadvantage would be moving between sites visitors would get a cookie notice for each site which could potentially be confusing but once accepted or denied for each site would not come up again unless the visitor changes their browser settings.
- I anticipate that the engagement with the community website will potentially decrease slightly as it is not as engaged with the community as the Parish Council element.
- We would utilise the current wickhambrook.org domain to leave the existing site in place with the Parish Council element removed. Standard email accounts currently provided to members of our community would also remain in place.

OPTION C - .gov.uk Parish Council emails only and existing website in entirety
We use wickhambrook-pc.gov.uk to host your email and the whole of the Wickhambrook website including the community based elements such as the MSC, clubs etc. The possible disadvantage to this option is that all information on the website would have the .gov.uk element to it. So for instance, posts from clubs about talks would be under the .gov.uk banner. There is a connotation attached to .gov.uk and I would suggest we need to consider how village information could potentially be perceived when it is displayed under the domain name authority of a .gov.uk.

Using this option, the standard community email accounts would remain in place on wickhambrook.org.

OPTION D - Email as per Option A, website remain as is
We leave the website in its entirety on wickhambrook.org. Community emails would remain as they are.

There is also the option to leave your email accounts as they are but I believe we discussed they are better placed on the .gov.uk domain if possible and so I have not provided that option. If you would like the options for that, then just let me know.

Domain Name Costs
.gov.uk domain registration - £30 plus VAT per annum
.org.uk domain renewal - £22 plus VAT per 2 year
.org domain renewal - domain provided within hosting costs by Mdsign

Hosting Costs

.gov.uk website hosting - if only email no charge

.gov.uk website hosting - email and Parish Council website £335 less 25% for two sites

.org.uk email hosting - no charge as provided through Microsoft accounts.

.org email and website hosting currently £335. If split less 25% discount for two sites.

.org email only £55 per annum.

Development fees

Costs for managing the set up of .gov.uk domain name, hosting and email services - no charge

Costs for splitting the website into two - difficult to assess currently so an estimate would be £315 - £630.

Management costs

Creating hosting package, setting up domain, liaising with Clerk and email provider, potentially moving site if not split and updating all links and software.

Dependent upon options chosen above but estimated to be between £180 - £270.

Security premium plugin costs

This is a cost that will need to be considered whether it is applied to the Parish Council or Community website if they are split. As it has been indicated to us that if the website is on the .gov.uk domain it receives additional security protection via the cyber security monitoring provided by the government, there is an argument that it would be better use of the premium plugin to be used on the community site. This may be an aspect we seek advice on. There is the potential that it is considered suitable for both sites which would incur the cost of an additional license.

The above is the situation as I currently understand it. To summarise, using the .gov.uk domain is possible and I can manage the switch over for you along with Glenn if you decide to make changes to your email. Once you have made a decision on how you would like to proceed we can set a plan in place to aim for a smooth transition.

The costs above have been worked out very conservatively and the tasks involved are most likely to take much more time than has been estimated. This is in the spirit of the reduction in my costs for the services I provide to the parish.

If you have any questions or need more information, then please just let me know.

Best wishes

Maria Sumner
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